

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**South Cache 8-9 Center
10 South 480 West
Hyrum, Utah 84319**

March 16-17, 2005



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
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**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**South Cache 8-9 Center
10 South 480 West
Hyrum, Utah 84319**

March 16-17, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
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Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 16-17, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of South Cache 8-9 Center is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Teri Cutler is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at South Cache 8-9 Center, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at South Cache 8-9 Center.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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Scott Rigby.....	Supervisor, Purchasing & Warehouse
Becky Wadsworth.....	Title 1 Coordinator
Patti Willis	Literacy Coordinator

SOUTH CACHE 8-9 CENTER
ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Teri Cutler Principal
Sheri Hansen Assistant Principal
Dustin Hunter Resource Officer

Counseling

Kristin Nielsen Davis Counselor
Alex Hansen Counselor

Support Staff

Marsha Petersen Principal/Finance Secretary
Kim Egbert Lunch Secretary
Jo Phillips Attendance Secretary
MaryJo Noble Registrar
Lonny Zook Head Custodian
Rex Bailey Custodian
Ila Rowser Custodian
Trudy Byington Head Cook

Faculty

Julie Anderson	Melanie Hall	Jan Nelson
Sherry Anderson	Lance Hansen	Brad Noble
Pat Andreasen	Ron Hellstern	Austin Nunn
Michael Bailey	Barbara Hunsaker	Chad Olsen
Brent Bingham	Rebecca Jeppesen	Jody Orme
Burt Black	Yvonne Jessop	Cindy Page
Bruce Bohm	Sandra Johnson	Jeremy Petersen
Graydon Buchmiller	Tonya Jones	John Petersen
Carolyn Cooper	Vickie Jorgensen	Margaret Pettis
Kathy Cooper	Kyla Leyba	Amy Rasmussen
Jean Culbertson	Katherine Lucero	Voni Rivas
Barbara Farris	Debra Lund	Vic Sorensen
Brittany Foster	Monte McKinnon	Mary Spears
Will Francis	Connie Mecham	Sharon Weston
Mike Gurney	Krista Melani	Jennifer Whipple

SOUTH CACHE 8-9 CENTER

MISSION STATEMENT

South Cache 8-9 Center promotes success, respect, and responsibility in a safe environment to ensure student learning.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

WE BELIEVE:

- Success is earned.
- That all students can achieve success through effort, discipline and dedication.
- Everyone is responsible for his or her own actions and consequences.
- Safety is everyone's responsibility.
- In respecting diversity.
- Students will successfully communicate with others using a variety of strategies: reading writing, speaking, listening, etc.
- Students are more motivated when facilitators recognize a variety of learning styles, lessons planning, and assessment measures.
- All students can become life-long learners.
- All students will have sufficient credits to warrant sophomore status when they leave South Cache.
- All persons at South Cache will be accountable for their respective role within the educational system (i.e., students, teachers, administrators, parents, secretaries, custodians, and community members).
- Students will be able to solve complex problems using available resources.
- All persons at South Cache will work in a team effort to make the educational process a success.
- That good character includes appropriate social responses, manners, integrity, and citizenship.
- Respecting each other builds unity and strength within our school.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Robinette E. Bowden, Ed.D., Syracuse Junior High School, Davis School District,
Visiting Team Chairperson

Mary Jensen, Syracuse Junior High School, Davis School District.

Allen Turner, Scott M. Matheson Junior High School, Granite School District

Glen Westbroek, Orem Junior High School, Alpine School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

SOUTH CACHE 8-9 CENTER

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

South Cache 8-9 Center is located in the rural community of Hyrum, Utah, approximately ten miles south of Logan. In 1908 the Cache County School District was consolidated. Today the district contains approximately 13,250 students who comprise eleven elementary schools, four 6-7 schools, two 8-9 centers, two 10-12 high schools, and one alternative high school.

Teachers from the Freshman Center, Willow Valley, and Spring Creek were brought together in 1999 when the Willow Valley building was renamed South Cache 8-9 Center.

The school has 35.40 FTEs teaching in regular education classrooms. There are an additional 8.83 FTEs supporting the regular classroom program. These faculty members include a library media specialist, 2.16 counselors, 0.50 orchestra teachers, 0.73 bank teachers, 1.2 ESL teachers, three special education teachers, a teacher for students with severe disabilities, a school resource officer, an assistant principal, and a principal. Seven teachers are ESL-endorsed.

During the past several years, South Cache's student population has remained fairly constant. The current enrollment of 990 students (461 females and 529 males) is 90.4 percent Caucasian. The largest ethnic subpopulation is Hispanic, representing 7.98 percent of the student body. Other ethnic groups represented at the school are Asian, African American, Native American, and Pacific Islander. Approximately 26 percent of the student population qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch. Although the percentage of students enrolling in released time has declined over the past five years, it is consistently above 81 percent.

Eighty-eight students (8.3 percent) are served in special education, and 14 students (3.4 percent) receive limited English proficient (LEP) services. At the publishing of the accreditation self-study document, only five students were receiving 504 accommodations and fourteen students were receiving homebound services.

Student performance on the Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) in 8th and 9th grade Language Arts has steadily improved from 2002 to 2004, being at or above district average. Since 2002, Integrated Science scores on the CRT have declined slightly, but remain equal to or above district performance. Average CRT scores in Algebra and Geometry are significantly above district performance. However, it may not be appropriate to compare the Pre-Algebra scores with district averages, since the population of students taking Pre-Algebra differs from students taking Pre-Algebra in 7th grade.

In general, information from the school profile depicts a homogeneous student body achieving at or above state and district performance levels.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The community, faculty, students, and staff of South Cache 8-9 Center have devoted a great deal of time and effort to self-analysis. A consistent theme of the analysis was a desire to help students comprehend instructional material. The analysis provides evidence that a strong rapport exists among staff members. The addition of 8th grade to a school that was previously focused on only 9th grade has provided challenges. Teachers want to collaborate in a team situation with the goal of increasing student understanding and success.

Throughout the profile, there is evidence that teachers make a conscientious effort to provide good communication to parents. A variety of communication methods are in use. Perhaps the profile's most significant communication item involves student grades. The majority of stakeholders express confidence in the efforts employed to help students complete missing work.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

The Visiting Team would encourage South Cache 8-9 Center to disaggregate its student performance data. This may assist the stakeholders in identifying student sub-populations that should be targeted for intervention.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- The Visiting Team suggests exploring communication methods with the community to showcase the school's many positive activities, so stakeholders can comprehend the school's total impact on student lives.
- The Visiting Team encourages the staff to regularly review the mission and belief statements to incorporate new learning, new staff members, and current pedagogy.
- The Visiting Team suggests continuously reviewing student test performance data at the department level to provide the staff with opportunities to compare student sub-groups and proficiency.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- c) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

The faculty and administration have made a sincere and effective self-study on behalf of students. The accreditation report reflects the efforts of the staff to use data and survey information to formulate an effective action plan.

- d) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The school's self-study would be more effective if the profile contained more disaggregated data. The information provided by the Utah State University Indicators of School Quality provides evidence of the strong support of stakeholders for both the instructional process and the climate of the school. The Visiting Team recommends that the administration and faculty continue to monitor the areas that show potential for improvement.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

South Cache 8-9 Center's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Students will become effective communicators.
2. Students will become critical thinkers.
3. Students will work cooperatively within the constraints of a group.
4. Students will be lifelong learners.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

South Cache 8-9 Center has been working on mission and belief statements since lead teachers and administrators returned from accreditation training in the spring of 2001. With the changing configuration on the school from a standalone ninth grade center to an 8-9 grades center, the faculty had a compelling need to redefine its mission and beliefs. In meetings with the school stakeholders (School

Community Council, faculty, students, and parents), the mission and belief statements were adopted and placed above classroom doors in 2002.

As new staff members were added to the faculty, the mission and beliefs were reviewed. In interviews with staff members, students, and community members, it became clear that the school community is united in their vision of the school. Students cannot only articulate the mission and DRSLs, but when asked they seem to understand the purpose and intent of these goals.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The school has an exhaustive list of beliefs. Since beliefs represent core principles intended to guide adults in making the decisions that affect student learning, the Visiting Team suggests that South Cache 8-9 Center revisit some of its belief statements. The school needs to keep in mind that organizational belief statements should be limited to principles for which the adults—not the students—within the organization hold themselves accountable. For example, “All students will have sufficient credits . . .” should be revisited to reflect the principle under which adults will function to assure that the students will have sufficient credits. The statements that refer to student expectations should be reframed as organizational beliefs; for example, “As mentors for our students, we will hold ourselves accountable to make sure that all students will have sufficient credits . . .”

- e) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

DRSLs are the learning goals a school community has for all students. They answer the question, “What should all students know and be able to do in order to be successful in the 21st century?” South Cache has defined four DRSLs that reflect the essence of the Utah Life Skills adopted by the Utah State Board of Education.

DRSLs are goals, and need to be defined in such a way that they are SMART:

Specific – focused on tangible behaviors or performance areas.

Measurable – the standards by which good, outstanding or minimal performance is measured.

Attainable – stretching beyond what is being done now, yet reachable.

Relevant – central to the school’s mission or purpose.

Trackable – capable of being bound, with a deadline for completion.

The Visiting Team applauds the efforts of the faculty to develop indicators for each DRSL.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

South Cache 8-9 Center is dedicated to providing a strong, meaningful curriculum based on the Utah State Core Curriculum. The DRSLs selected correlate with the Utah Life Skills. Individual teachers are allowed the opportunity to facilitate classroom instructional strategies based upon core standards and objectives.

It is apparent that teachers are working upon the clearly defined Utah State Core standards. Departments regularly meet and discuss how they can align instruction within grade levels of the department. Many departments collaborate to develop shared instructional concepts and methods. In areas where this occurred, it was observed by visiting teachers from other classrooms who teach the same subject.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Staff collaboration was substantiated throughout the school accreditation report and verified through interviews with department members. The faculty members at the school strive to meet the State Core in their instruction. The application of DRSLs is evident in daily lessons. Interviews with students indicated that they knew the DRSLs and were able to identify which were used in different class instruction over several weeks.

The school puts emphasis on both reading and technology. These areas are implied but not addressed specifically in the DRSLs.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

During the visit, the Visiting Team saw a variety of learning activities taking place in individual classrooms. Students in a science classroom were comparing the designs of passive solar houses. The process progressed from planning to building small model houses. Each house was subjected to the same experimental tests to collect data and determine which house used the sun's energy most effectively. Several science classrooms included higher-level thinking skills as students were involved in explorations and needed to analyze the data collected. Other examples in the building were also exemplary. A large majority of teachers were actively involved in the educational process of their students. Language arts

teachers included high interest activities in their classrooms. A reading teacher instructed students, who then gathered information from the newspaper. Book reports were created in the form of crossword puzzles, showing comprehension of terms read in the student's books. Computers were used to produce and publish poetry for inclusion in portfolios. Greek myths were introduced by having students demonstrate verbal storytelling.

Classroom management strategies seemed to be effective, as students were focused and actively engaged in learning throughout the visit. The St. Patrick's Day door competition proved that a positive learning environment can be fun. Classrooms and hallways are neat and clean. There is a minimum of student traffic in the halls during class time.

Many classes had student work displayed. This work was illustrative of student learning and included a wide variety of ability levels. The student work was fun to observe.

Interviews with teachers indicate a desire to be involved in more interdepartmental collaboration through teaming. As a school, South Cache 8-9 Center has enjoyed the practice of teaming in the past and aspires to return to this instructional model. Currently, students in the 8th and 9th grades are assigned to teams. Due to time constraints, there is a general feeling that the teaming process could be strengthened. The Visiting Team suggests matching the 9th grade interdisciplinary teams to the 8th grade teams by adding science to the team.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Special Education Department is well trained and qualified. Collaboration occurs between this department and mainstream teachers. Lessons, assignments, and assessments are modified or adjusted for special needs students. Special education teachers indicated that they are grateful for the willingness of regular education teachers to make needed accommodations. Parents related personal experiences with strategies and methods that teachers used to help their individual students.

Limited English proficient (LEP) students also receive special assistance in regular classrooms. These students enjoy their classes and are actively involved in class activities.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

South Cache 8-9 Center provides a variety of programs to support student learning. Teachers are available after school for those needing extra time to

complete assignments. Cache County School District provides buses to transport students at the conclusion of this after-hours help.

A wide variety of programs are available for interested students. These include clubs, athletic teams, and small group programs.

Quality Assessment Systems:

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Classroom observations and teacher discussions indicate that considerable effort has been invested by the faculty in assuring that testing methods are designed to help students understand what is being tested and become familiar with how they are going to show their competencies. These refinements have largely taken place at the departmental level. Weekly class agendas are posted along with key-concepts to be covered. Reviews of materials and concepts to be covered appear to be a common practice. The progress report and remediation system nicely support the overall expectation for student achievement.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

The following types of assessment tools were observed during the visit: selected response, group work, portfolios, and open response quizzes. This visit was made at the beginning of a trimester and no major testing was observed. Discussions with teachers indicate that a wide variety of testing methods are used. The Visiting Team cannot verify the frequency or whether or not all teachers are using these varied assessments.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

South Cache 8-9 Center has a small minority population. The Visiting Team did not find that those students were not achieving. There is evidence that the school's ELL program has forged significant collaborative efforts with departmental teachers, and that collaboration is done regularly. School efforts to bring minority families into the school community were noted as well.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

The principal and assistant principal work effectively to support the mission and beliefs of the school. Behavioral data supports the qualitative reports that the school climate is positive and that student behavior is monitored in a consistent, fair and firm manner. The faculty is extremely supportive of both administrators and reports that the school is improving under their leadership.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

This administration, like most administrations nationwide, is learning to use data to make informed decisions about the school. The administration has taken time to study and implement research-based school improvement strategies, such as the Pittsburgh model. The Visiting Team applauds these efforts and recommends that the administration continue to train teachers in research-based methods through professional development opportunities such as faculty meetings and summer in-service.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Students at South Cache are assessed using a variety of appropriate methods. Assessments results are utilized in determining comprehension levels and whether remediation is necessary. The administration requires that teachers post both state core objectives and learning standards in their classrooms. Students are given rubrics and study guides to help them focus on the most important concepts in the unit of study. Teachers use both informal and formal assessments. Accommodations are made when appropriate for students with ESL or IEP needs.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

The administration monitors the school budget and other resources in an effective manner. Teachers report that their needs are met within the constraints of state and district budgets.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The administration works cooperatively with the school leadership to allocate and secure resources for the school. The after-school REACH program is an example of an effective use of grant monies available to the school. Since these monies are depleted, the school is now seeking alternative ways to fund the needed after-school activities.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The school administration has made a concerted effort to incorporate parents and students into the decision-making process. The School Community Council and PTSA provide opportunities to involve the school community. Teachers report a high percentage of parents participating at school events such as Back-to-School Night. The administration and faculty are to be commended for their efforts to involve parents of Spanish-speaking students in special school events conducted in the parents' native language. Additionally, through surveys, the administration offered to all parents and students the opportunity to have a voice in decision-making process.

The SEOP process, school website, and school handbooks are just a few examples of the efforts of the administration and faculty to collaborate with the stakeholders in decisions that positively affect student learning.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

The Visiting Team noticed positive relationships among teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, resource officer, custodians and cooks. Early morning staff "eye-opener" get-togethers are held throughout the year as a collaborative arena for staff members and the administration to openly share comments and concerns. The staff is very supportive of the direction that the school is taking under the leadership of the current administration. There is a strong sense of collegiality. The staff recognizes individual achievements and special events.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

South Cache 8-9 Center is reaching out to the community it serves and inviting parents and businesses to play an active part in investing in their children. The Visiting Team met with several parents, who agreed with the Community Building Focus Group that parents and community members feel welcome and valued at the school. The Visiting Team was impressed, and commends the school for its efforts to reach sub-populations with such activities as the Latino Back-to-School Night. The Visiting Team recommends that the school continue its efforts to increase parent support for these events. The Visiting Team also

commends the school for its practice of sending biweekly progress reports to parents.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

A variety of professional development opportunities are available. In-service is offered during the school year and in the summer. Each faculty meeting begins with several teachers sharing a research-based teaching strategy. The faculty members read professional materials and share sections during the faculty meetings.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The administration and faculty have embraced the accreditation process as a vehicle for continuous improvement. Previous in-service efforts have been replaced by accreditation.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The school's action plan is a little over-focused, and relates to the school's DRSLs without specific connection to desired outcomes. The Visiting Team feels that it could be improved by identifying and setting milestones, as identified by continuing assessments.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

The entire school community appears committed to the school improvement process as outlined in the action plan, both in concept and in practice. Among the most exciting aspect of the South Cache program is this evident commitment, at every level, to the individual student's achievement, using every tool available to help each student make constructive progress. The evidence is that teachers are collaborating for the benefit of individual students!

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

While there is no doubt about the direction of the plan, the Visiting Team recommends that the action plan be improved by identifying needs, what the desired outcome would be, and how each component will move the school toward those goals. A timeline would give responsible individuals a framework, and would help the whole school to buy into the process.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the administration and faculty for a positive collegial working relationship that puts the needs of students first. This relationship is evident in the voices of students who know they have a caring and dedicated administrative, teaching, and support staff.
- The faculty is to be commended for its support of the biweekly progress reports, the availability of teachers to provide tutoring to students, and the willingness of teachers to retest and to reassess using various methods.
- The Visiting Team commends the faculty, students, and community for the unified school spirit that is evident throughout the school.
- The administration and faculty are to be commended for the sincere effort and countless hours they put forth on behalf of the students in making an effective self-study.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends that the faculty and staff take the next steps to determine specific methods for gathering evidence of student achievement related to specific DRSLs and indicators.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the staff rework some of the belief statements that relate to student achievement, and restate these statements in relation to adult beliefs that support the student expectations.
- Although the Visiting Team applauds the school's efforts to support interdisciplinary instruction through teaming, the Visiting Team recommends that the administration and faculty explore alternative scheduling options to provide additional time for teachers to implement teaming and to foster the expansion of the teaming model within the school.
- The Visiting Team applauds the efforts of the administration to begin to utilize data to make decisions, and recommends continued effort and professional development in this area. The Visiting Team also recommends that the administration continue to seek additional funding to support the after-school REACH program without relying solely on student fees.
- The Visiting Team suggests that the faculty explore professional development opportunities to assist in differentiating instruction to meet the needs of gifted and/or highly motivated students within the South Cache 8-9 Center course offerings.